

**Journal  
of the  
Royal Society of Western Australia**

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Part 2

**4.—A History of the Royal Society of Western Australia, and its role in the Community.**

**Presidential Address, 1964.**

By C. F. H. Jenkins, M.A.\*

*Delivered—20th July, 1964.*

Ladies and gentlemen;

I was greatly honoured when this society elected me as President for the year 1945-46 but I regard it as a much greater honour to have the privilege of holding office for a second term, particularly in the Society's Jubilee Year.

I joined the Royal Society in 1929 and have served on the council since 1932. During that period I have been associated with every office excepting that of treasurer and so have been very closely connected with the Society's activities for over 30 years. This experience has encouraged me to investigate the earlier history of the organisation and to present these findings together with a number of general comments as my Presidential Address for this anniversary year.

If any other excuse is necessary for presenting what may be regarded as largely parochial material to a gathering such as this, I might point out that Royal Society presidents in all the other states have given comparable addresses, as did Sir Howard Florey in his 1963 Anniversary Address to the Royal Society of London.

The Royal Society of London is of course, the most celebrated scientific society in the world and received its charter from King Charles II on 22nd April, 1663. The formation of this society marked the development of modern science in Britain and provided a pattern to be followed by such empire countries as South Africa, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, all of whom modelled their societies on the parent body.

Modern science came to Australia with James Cook and Joseph Banks in 1770, but it was not until 1821 that the first scientific society was formed when Sir Thomas Brisbane, Governor of N.S.W. founded the Philosophical Society of Australia. This survived for little more than 12 months, but was followed in 1850 by the Australian Philosophical Society, for the encouragement of Arts, Science, Commerce and

Agriculture. In 1885 this became the Philosophical Society of N.S.W. and in 1866 it assumed the title of the Royal Society of N.S.W.

The Royal Society of Van Diemens Land for Horticulture, Botany and Advancement of Science was formed in 1843, later of course to become the Royal Society of Tasmania. The Royal Society of Victoria was established in 1854, the Royal Society of South Australia in 1877 and that of Queensland in 1884 (Elkin, A. P. 1962, *A.J.S.* 25: 2).

A Royal Society was formed in Canberra in 1930 and at first assumed the name of the Royal Society of Australia. The various state Royal Societies were opposed to this title however and in 1955 it was changed to the Royal Society of Canberra.

**Royal Society of Western Australia**

The foundations of the Royal Society of W.A. were laid as far back as 1891 when under the presidency of Sir John Forrest (later Lord Forrest) the Western Australian Natural History Society was founded. This society did not publish a journal and failed to survive beyond 1895. Then in 1897 the Mueller Botanical Society was established with Sir John Forrest president (with E. J. Bickford Chairman) and His Excellency the Governor, Lt. Col. Sir Gerard Smith K.C.M.G. Patron. The remaining members of Council were as follows:

Vice Presidents:

Hon. E. H. Wittenoom, M.L.C.  
G. Leak, M.L.A.

Hon. Secretary:

F. J. Skewes.

Council:

Dr. F. Tratman.  
Dr. F. Wilkinson.  
A. W. Milligan.  
J. S. Batty.

In 1903 the scope of the Society was broadened and the name was changed to "Western Australian Natural History Society, with which is incorporated the Mueller Botanical Society."

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The following comprised the first Council:

Patron:

His Excellency the Governor, Admiral  
Sir Frederick Bedford, G.C.B.

President:

C. R. P. Andrews.

Vice Presidents:

Dr. F. Tratman.  
B. H. Woodward.  
A. Purdie.

Editors:

C. R. P. Andrews.  
F. Crossman.

Treasurer and Librarian:

A. Purdie.

Secretary:

F. S. Dobbie.

Council:

A. F. Crossman.  
E. W. Hursthouse.  
A. Gibb Maitland.  
A. W. Milligan.  
Justice R. MacMillan.  
H. C. Prinsep.

In 1909 the Societies' work broadened still further and the name was changed accordingly to the "Western Australian Natural History and Science Society." The first officer bearers were as follows:

Patron:

His Excellency the Governor Sir Gerald  
Strickland K.C.M.G.

President:

Dr. F. Tratman.

Vice Presidents:

A. Gibb Maitland.  
Dr. A. Morrison.

Treasurer:

T. Thorpe.

Editors:

H. M. Giles.  
C. P. Conigrave.

Secretary:

C. P. Conigrave.

Librarian:

C. P. Conigrave.

Council:

E. S. Simpson.  
W. Catton Grasby.  
T. N. Lee.  
F. G. Brown.  
H. M. Giles.

It is recorded that in 1907 several meetings lapsed for want of a quorum and a committee consisting of Messrs. B. H. Woodward, E. A. Mann, J. B. Allan and Dr. J. B. Cleland, was appointed to investigate the possibility of forming a Royal Society or alternatively affiliating with the Royal Society of South Australia. No immediate action was taken however, and the title of Royal Society was not assumed until 1914. The letter conferring this honour was presented to Council by Professor Dakin on

December 2nd, 1913 and published in the "West Australian" on December 13th. The first office bearers for the new Society were as follows:

Patron:

His Majesty King George V.

Vice Patron:

His Excellency the Governor, Major  
General Sir Harry Barron,  
K.C.M.G.

President:

Professor W. J. Dakin.

Vice Presidents:

A. Gibb Maitland.  
Professor A. D. Ross.

Hon Secretaries:

M. A. Browning.  
W. B. Alexander.

Hon. Treasurer:

J. J. East.

Hon. Librarian:

A. O. Watkins.

Hon. Editors:

A. Gibb Maitland.  
M. A. Browning.  
W. B. Alexander.

Council:

H. B. Curlewis.  
W. J. Hancock.  
A. Montgomery.  
E. S. Simpson.  
B. H. Woodward.

#### Functions and Aims of The Royal Society

The main functions and aims of the Society are summarised in paragraph 2 of the 1936 Constitution which reads as follows: "To promote and to assist in the advancement of Science in all its branches." This gives the Society the widest possible scope and places no restriction upon membership, providing correct election procedures are followed.

In addition to producing an annual journal, the Society has conducted regular meetings for the presentation of scientific papers, discussions and popular talks. A perusal of the records show that the Society has concerned itself with many matters of public interest and has offered advice and criticism where these have been considered necessary. In addition to subjects such as Geology and Biology which constitute the major contributions to the Society, papers and reports have been presented on such matters of topical interest as the following:

Spiritual Healing (Vol. X, p xxiv)

Water Divining (Vol. VI, p 112)

Housing (Vol. V, p 62)

Decimal Currency in Australia (Vol. IV, p 16)

Town Planning (Vol. V, p 39)

as well as other subjects of public concern or popular interest.

#### Special Committees.

The Society has on many occasions appointed working committees to investigate problems of public interest or major importance. Some idea

of the range of subjects covered will be gained from the following list:

- Vermin Committee (Vol. VII, p 112)
- Salinity Committee (Vol. XIII, p xiii)
- Flora & Fauna Conservation Committee (Vol. XIII, p xiv)
- Excursion Committee (Vol. XIV, p xviii)
- Natural Regions Committee (Vol. XIV, p xviii)
- Prawn Committee
- Social Committee
- Standing Committee on Conservation.

The following notes and extracts relating to several of these Committees indicate the enthusiasm and impartiality with which members carried out their tasks.

#### *Spiritual Healing*

A Committee consisting of Professor A. D. Ross, Professor G. E. Nicholls and Professor A. C. Fox were appointed to investigate—

- (1) whether the methods of the healing mission were effective in ameliorating suffering due to ordinary diseases;
- (2) the types of cases in which any such benefit was more probable or more pronounced;
- (3) the types of cases, if any, in which definite harm might result.

Interest in the above problem was stimulated by the Hickson Mission and the Society was promised the co-operation of the B.M.A. and the Anglican and Congregational Churches. However, after five months no patient was forthcoming for investigation and the Committee expressed its regret that it could make no personal observations and submitted as a progress report the evidence of the 1914 Lambeth Conference which stated, "Spiritual Healing like all treatments of suggestion can be expected to be permanently effective only in cases of what are termed functional—as apart from organic—diseases." (Vol. X, p. xxiv).

#### *Divining Rod*

"On a portion of ground previously proven by Reverend W. Kennedy to be free from any vitiating effects of underground water . . . 2 3/4" hoses were laid several yards apart." Nine tests were carried out with varying water flows through these pipes and only two proved correct. Trials were also carried out with glass jars of various salinity. Mr. Kennedy testing the water by holding small bags of salt while using the divining rod.

The first Committee investigating the divining rod consisted of E. S. Simpson and Professors W. J. Dakin and D. Ross. Dr. Simpson later resigned and Professor Ross and Messrs. A. Webster and W. A. Shelton officially reported: "As the results of other tests described in this report would not justify the expense of field trials necessitating the sinking of wells, the Committee desires to be relieved from further investigations." (Vol. VI, p 116).

As a result of these investigations Mr. Catton Grasby resigned from the Royal Society because he stated that he had suggested the carrying

out of the tests but was not invited to act on any of the Committees. Mr. Grasby later withdrew his resignation.

#### *Houses in Western Australia*

Mr. Wright (President, W.A. Institute of Architects) makes adverse comments upon the haphazard subdivision of land in many Perth suburbs, and the cramped conditions which permit up to 20 houses to the acre. He criticises the stereo-type gardens and the ever recurring symmetrical front hedge. His advice is to consult an expert and to "shun the practical man" . . . "He is as ignorant as a Bolshevik and as brainless as a cupie. He is not a practical but a vain fellow and taking his advice generally entails wasted expense and dissatisfaction." (Vol. V, p 64).

"In Russia they think anyone is competent to rule the country except an educated man. In Perth the idea is evidently occurring that one sells the plans of a house along with a pound of butter. Such a house requires a high hedge." (Vol. V, p 71.)

#### *Town Planning*

Mr. W. A. Saw stresses the necessity for slum clearance and prevention, and the provision of open spaces. He points out that Claremont has only 1.3% of land available as reserves, the Perth Road Board less than 1%, whereas town planners advocate 10%. Our large cities he says are filled with "physically crushed and mentally warped men and women". (Vol. V, pp 40 & 45.)

Although some of these committees did not fulfil their original promise others like the Salinity Committee under the chairmanship of Prof. Wilsmore, the Natural Regions Committee consisting of Messrs. E. de C. (later Prof.) Clarke, C. A. Gardner and L. Glauert, and the Vermin Committee, produced valuable reports.

#### *Furthering the Cause of Science*

In addition to promoting the immediate interests of its members the Royal Society of Western Australia has been untiring in its efforts to further the cause of science both within the State and the Commonwealth.

In 1918 it was represented by Sir Edgeworth David and Mr. J. H. Maiden at a conference of Australia Royal Societies convened by the Royal Society of N.S.W. at the request of the Royal Society of London. This gathering laid the foundations for the formation some years later, of the Australian National Research Council, which was later superseded by the Australian Academy of Science.

In May 1930 Prof. Wilsmore represented the Society at another conference sponsored by the Royal Society of Victoria to consider the formation of a Royal Society of Australia or a federation of State Royal Societies. The matter was further considered at the 1932 meeting of A.N.Z.A.A.S. but was not favoured because it was feared that State societies would lose their identity and this could cause complications where Government grants were concerned.

In 1945 the Western Australian Royal Society suggested to other State Royal Societies that certain reciprocal rights be approved for members visiting interstate. The idea was unanimously accepted and Royal Society members are now privileged to attend meetings in any State although of course, the normal restrictions still apply to voting rights.

In an effort to coordinate the activities of the increasing number of specialist societies appearing in Western Australia, the Royal Society called a meeting of delegates from appropriate organisations and discussed ways in which meeting clashes could be minimised, how societies could best advise one another concerning matters of mutual interest and how the dissipation of effort amongst Western Australian scientific personnel could be reduced.

Following this meeting, held in November, 1959, a letter was received from A.N.Z.A.A.S. indicating, "That it was prepared to play a more active role in Western Australia. This would include compilation of a register of authorities in various fields (including visitors to Western Australia) and conducting special lectures, symposia, etc."

It was agreed that these aims did not clash with those of the Royal Society and it was resolved that as A.N.Z.A.A.S. hoped to establish a part time secretariate in the near future it would be the appropriate body to carry on the work of co-ordination as suggested. This matter has still not been finalised although some progress has already been made but the fact that the last list of Western Australian scientific and allied societies compiled by A.N.Z.A.A.S. numbered 81, indicates the urgent need for some rationalisation measures if these bodies are to function efficiently.

#### *Nature Conservation*

Although conservation reports do not figure prominently in the Society's journals, vigorous efforts to protect our native fauna and flora have been made right from the inception of the first Western Australian Natural History Society in 1891.

With Sir John Forrest as President this Society initiated action which finally led to the creation of the 160,000 acre North Dandalup Reserve which was the first large area set aside for the preservation of fauna and flora. Unfortunately this reserve was later released for "timber purposes" despite a petition to His Excellency the Governor Sir Frederick Bedford in 1907.

As early as 1879 the Mueller Botanical Society wrote to the Commissioner of Railways deploring "the wanton destruction of wildflowers growing on the Perth-Fremantle line" and asking him to "prevent any further desecration of the flora on the line beforementioned and also on all other lines in the colony". Similar comments were also sent to the Director of Public Works and the Inspector of Telephones.

Other reservations influenced by the Society's action include Barrow Island, the Stirling Ranges and John Forrest National Park.

The Society combined with the Pastoralists Association in pressing for the protection of the Wild Turkey and was a contributing factor

in having the Vermin Regulations altered so that they would not apply to emus in the lower south-west. The Society has also arranged deputations to the controlling authorities to ensure the preservation of fauna at Pelican Point, Butlers Swamp (now Lake Claremont) and various other areas. It opposed the construction of an airstrip on the Abrolhos Islands, the establishment of exotic birds on Rottnest Island, and joined other bodies in advocating the preservation of ethnological features on Depuch Island.

The Royal Society has always maintained a keen interest in the welfare of Kings Park and while it opposed the building of a swimming pool in the reserve it was one of the prime movers for the establishment of a Botanical Gardens. It strongly supported action initiated by the National Parks Board of Western Australia and organised a deputation led by Mr. C. Shedley to the then Minister for Lands Mr. L. E. Kelly on February 2nd, 1959. No immediate decision was obtained but negotiations continued until the end of the year when the Minister for Lands Mr. Bovell announced the Government's decision to establish the Gardens and to appoint a director.

In 1960 the Royal Society established a "Standing Committee on Conservation" (Chairman C. F. H. Jenkins) to carry on the work commenced by the Sub-committee on National Parks and Reserves (Chairman W. D. L. Ride) appointed by the Australian Academy of Science. The Royal Society Committee comprised the original Academy Sub-committee plus several new members appointed by Council. This Committee has strongly supported efforts to publish the Academy report on National Parks and Reserves and was finally successful in arranging co-operation between the Australian Academy of Science and the National Parks Board of Western Australia in financing this project. By reason of its personnel this committee has close association with many Government Departments and is doing everything possible to ensure the preservation of suitable flora and fauna reserves as well as other sites of scientific and cultural interest.

The Society's present policy on conservation, particularly in relation to acclimatisation contrasts strongly with that presented by the Hon. Walter Kingsmill in his address entitled, "Acclimatisation" read before the Society in 1918. Few would now agree with Mr. Kingsmill's statement that, "Perhaps the most wonderful instance of the value and success of acclimatisation may be found in New Zealand . . . looked upon now as a sportsman's paradise." Nor will they join with him in lamenting the failure of red deer to establish at Albany and Cape Leeuwin, or Indian black buck to survive on the Murchison. Rather will they rejoice that the present evidence of this acclimatisation era is mainly restricted to the kookaburra, two species of doves and several species of fish.

#### **Royal Society's Medal**

In order to mark the centenary of the birth of Lord Kelvin (June 26th, 1924), the Royal Society decided to institute an award for outstanding work in science, to be known as the

Royal Society's Medal. Because of its association with the Kelvin celebrations this medal is often incorrectly referred to as the Kelvin Medal.

The rules provide that the recipient of the medal shall be chosen by the Council following recommendations from a special Medal Committee and that awards shall not be made more frequently than every 4 years.

The following awards have been made up to the present time:

- Dr. W. J. Handcock—1924: For this pioneering studies in radiography. Unfortunately his devotion to this work seriously undermined his health. (Vol. X, p xvii)
- Dr. E. S. Simpson—1929: For contributions to the scientific knowledge of mineralogy and geology in Western Australia. (Vol. XV, p xvii)
- Mr. W. M. Carne—1933: For outstanding work in the field of plant pathology, particularly the disease of Bitter Pit in apples. (Vol. XIX, p xi)
- Mr. A. Gibb Maitland—1937: For long and distinguished work in the field of Western Australian geology (Vol. XXIII, p xi)
- Professor E. de C. Clarke—1941: For distinguished service as teacher and research worker in geology (Vol. XXIX, p 171)
- Mr. Ludwig Glauert—1945: For his outstanding contributions to Australian Zoology (Vol. XXX, p vi)
- Mr. C. A. Gardner—1949: For his distinguished work on the Western Australian flora (Vol. XXXV, p v)
- Dr. H. W. Bennetts—1955: For distinguished work in veterinary science and particularly for investigations into entero-toxaemia of sheep and the effects of Western Australian poison plants on domestic stock (Vol. 40, p 1)
- Professor E. J. Underwood—1959: For outstanding work in the field of animal nutrition (Vol. 43, p 67).

#### Finance and Endowment

##### Finance

Two sources of income have been available to the Royal Society and its fore-runners—members subscriptions and Government grants or subsidies. The subscription to the Mueller Botanical Society was 10s. 6d. and of course was quite insufficient to finance the printing of a journal. Soon after its foundation therefore, the Society approached the Government for substantial assistance and wrote to the Premier and Colonial Treasurer, the Right Honourable Sir John Forrest, P.C., K.C.M.G., as follows:

Sir,

We have the honour to inform you that at a meeting of the Council of the Mueller Botanic Society, held on Thursday the 7th

inst., the following resolutions were unanimously passed for presentation to your Government:

1. "That this Society which is established for the public good, in view of the promised assistance of the Government, communicate with the Right Honourable the Premier and Colonial Treasurer, requesting that a sum of at least £500 per annum be placed on the Estimates for 1897-8 for the use of the Mueller Botanic Society of Western Australia."

2. "That the time has arrived when such assistance as set forth in the foregoing resolution is absolutely necessary to the efficient working of the Society as an institution calculated to benefit not only its members but the community of Western Australia generally."

3. "That the following reasons be given in the Society's communication to the Honourable Premier, showing the need of such monetary assistance, and the uses to which it is intended the money should be placed."

(a) "That the Society have established a Herbarium for the benefit and use of the public, which shall be conducted on a somewhat similar basis to the Museum.

(b) "That it is the intention of the Society to establish as soon as the necessary accommodation can be secured, a Botanical Library of the most complete and reliable works; such Library to be open to the Public for general reference.

(c) "That provision is to be made on the next quarter's syllabus for the establishment of elementary and advanced classes for the education of the younger members of the community and others desirous of studying Botany or any relative science. The need for such classes is obvious, and the work and expense entailed by their establishment would be by no means small. The importance of this particular department of the Society's work will be readily recognised, and it is essential that in a colony possessing such floral wealth as does Western Australia, instruction in technical botany should be given to the people."

(d) "That a series of lectures dealing with botanical subjects in general are being delivered, which up to the present have been most successfully rendered, and also have proved educational and interesting."

For carrying into effect the foregoing resolutions it will, of course, be necessary that the Society should have proper office accommodation, for its library, etc., in rooms centrally situated and easily accessible.

*Employment of Officers and their  
Remuneration.*

Certain officers will be required in conducting the affairs of the Society as follows:

A professed Botanist, who may be secured at a salary of £300 per annum; a Secretary (the duties of this office in such an institution will necessarily be numerous) at a salary of, say, £150 per annum; a Librarian to supervise the Society's library Herbarium, at a salary of £50 per annum.

The salaries of the above officials will amount in all to £500 per annum. This sum, as stated in the second resolution, is absolutely necessary in order that the Society may discharge those duties for which it has been established, and which necessarily devolve upon such an institution. It is anticipated that the membership fees may in time, realise the amount necessary to pay rents, furnish the library, and defray general expenses.

In submitting to your favourable consideration the foregoing facts and figures in connection with the efficient working of the Society we think it hardly necessary to remind the Government who are so well acquainted with Western Australia and its resources, of the need existing here for such an institution as the Mueller Botanic Society. Its sphere of usefulness is unlimited: and, further, having for its main object the development of some of the important resources of a progressive and independent Colony, we have perfect confidence in approaching its Government and Parliament for support and sympathy.

In conclusion therefore, we thank you in anticipation of the favourable consideration you will extend to the Society and awaiting your reply,

(Sgd.) E. J. Bickford,  
Chairman/Secretary.

Needless to say the request was not granted in full and the first Government contribution was a promise of £50 per annum. This was not maintained regularly however, and the records make repeated references to deputations to the Premier for renewed or increased grants.

With the formation of the Western Australian Natural History Society, the subscription was maintained at 10s. 6d. but for a time the Government Grant was raised to £75. Then in answer to a request for further assistance the Society received a severe setback. The Treasurer advised that a formula had been devised for determining grants to various societies based upon membership. On this basis the Natural History Society was entitled to £15. In 1912 the grant rose to £25 and in 1913 it reached £50. Then in 1914 the Colonial Treasurer authorised the Government Printer to spend £30 on the Society's printing to compensate for the absence of a grant. The subscription was also raised to £1 1s. for ordinary members and 10s. 6d. for Associates. In 1915 the Government Printer was authorised to print 100 pages at 7s. 6d. per page, but due to a misunderstanding

additional printing was submitted and the Government accused the Society of indulging in "sharp practices." The misunderstanding was explained away and for some time the printing of the journal was authorised as funds became available, but without regular Government assistance.

In 1922 finances were at such a low ebb that a committee was formed to investigate the conducting of a Wild Flower Show and exhibition to raise funds for the Society and a subscription list was started to assist in the publication of Vol. VIII of the Society's journal. £45 was collected towards printing costs but the exhibition was abandoned. Consideration was also given to raising the subscription but Council finally withdrew the recommendation.

In 1924 a deputation waited on the Government pointing out that our Royal Society was the only one in Australia not receiving Government assistance and requesting an annual grant of £100. No immediate decision was obtained but in 1926 a grant of £75 per year was provided and later this was raised to £100.

Then in 1931-32 the Financial Emergency Act was applied to the Royal Society grant and the Government contribution was reduced to £80. In 1935-36 the grant was lifted to £90 and the next year it was restored to £100.

In 1944 due to rising costs the Society was again in serious financial difficulties and action taken during that and subsequent years is summarised herewith in a report submitted to Council in June, 1949 by the Hon. Editor (Mrs. C. F. H. Jenkins).

"Summary of steps taken to stabilise the financial position of the Royal Society of Western Australia and to expediate publication of the Journal.

August 1944:

Detailed case drawn-up by President (Dr. Prider), Dr. Watson, Mr. Foreman and Dr. Nicholls and presented in writing to the Hon. The Premier, Mr. Willcocks. Dr. Prider and Dr. Nicholls discussed the matter with the Under Treasurer (Mr. Reid), January, 1945. Mr. Willcocks approved special grant of £100.

March, 1945:

Mr. Willcocks further approached for more substantial assistance, but further assistance refused.

November, 1945:

The President (Mr. Jenkins) addressed a communication to the Premier (Mr. Wise) and in March, 1946 discussed the position with the Under Treasurer (Mr. Reid) who consented to the following concessions:—

1. Increase of Annual Grant from £100 to £200.
2. Printing of Volume 32 (1945-46) without cost to the Society.
3. Society to live within its means from then on.

October, 1948:

Mr. Jenkins discussed the deteriorating financial position again with the under Treasurer (Mr. Reid) and the Government

Printer (Mr. Wyatt). The following was then approved:

1. The Government Grant of £200 per annum to cease.
2. Cost of Volume 34 (1947-48) to be borne by the Government.
3. Journal to be limited to 150 pages.
4. The arrangement to be reviewed after one year to ascertain cost to be borne by the Government."

This arrangement continued unaltered until 1952 when a letter was received from the Acting Under Treasurer Mr. K. Townsing drawing attention to the rising costs of printing and concluding with the following paragraph:

"Before the Government Printer is authorised to continue printing the Journal, I would like your Society's assurance that it will meet cost in excess of £500."

I again discussed the position with Mr. (now Sir) Alex. Reid, the Under Treasurer who stated that the old agreement would stand until further notice.

Between 1954 and 1957 further negotiations took place between the Society and the Under Treasurer concerning a change in journal format and some modifications in the financial arrangements but the basic policy remained unchanged.

In 1956 consideration was given to doubling the subscription rate and for appropriate increases to be made in the figures for Life Membership. The views of members were requested by circular and finally the rates were raised to £2 2s. for full members and £1 1s. for Associate Members as from the beginning of the year 1956-57.

#### *Endowment Land*

From the earliest days of the Mueller Botanical Society strenuous efforts have been made to obtain a Government grant of land on which to erect a permanent home for the Society. As far back as October 1897 funds were sought from the State Government for the employment of staff and reference was made to provision of "the necessary accommodation". Later in 1904 Chairman Mr. Bickford stressed the importance of obtaining premises both for meetings and to house the Society's library and collections.

In 1916 representatives of various interested bodies including the Institution of Engineers and the Royal Society appointed a deputation to present a case to the Government for a grant of land. Nothing came of this move but rumours were rife concerning extensive additions to the Museum and it was hoped that the society would obtain further accommodation in the old portion. In 1927 the Royal Society convened a meeting of appropriate societies to discuss the acquisition of land for a central building. As a result of this meeting the following motion was carried and forwarded to the Hon. Premier Mr. P. Collier.

"We the undersigned, who were appointed by a joint meeting of the Royal Society of Western Australia, Chemical Society, Engineering Standards' Society, West Australian Field Naturalists Club, Historical

Society, Economic Society of Australia & N.Z., League of Nations Union, West Australian Society of Arts, British Astronomical Association (W.A. Branch), and the Town Planning Association, beg to draw the attention of the Hon. the Premier to the fact that the various associations of scientific workers in this state are at present hampered in their operations through lack of a convenient and suitable meeting place, lecture hall and house room for their books and apparatus.

Your memorialists beg respectfully to submit that the provision of accommodation in a central position in Perth for the housing of such societies would fittingly form part of the building scheme which the Government has decided to undertake as part of the Centenary Celebration . . ."

Signed W. M. Carne,  
Royal Society of Western Australia.

E. O. Shann,  
Historical Society.

F. E. Allum,  
Economic Society.

In a later communication it was suggested that suitable facilities might include a lecture hall to seat 200 people and a library 40 ft. x 20 ft.

In the Annual Report for June 1929 the Secretary reported that, "at present there seems little prospect of securing adequate accommodation for no Government funds are available." Later in 1936 a further conference was held with the Institution of Engineers and the prospect was discussed of obtaining rooms in a University building planned for erection on the corner of Hay and William Streets. In 1937, the Societies' honorary solicitor the Hon. Mr. John Nicholson advised that negotiations to obtain Government land in Irwin Street had failed but stated that the Premier's Department had directed attention to a block on the corner of Beaufort Street and James Street and two blocks opposite Perth Boys' School. Negotiations for these blocks were never successfully completed and no serious efforts have been made to revive the issue, although in 1954 the Royal Society and other scientific bodies investigated the possibility of a building being erected on the Deanery site in St. George's Terrace. But the decision to retain the Deanery ended this project. In 1957 the Institution Engineers asked if the Royal Society were interested in joint negotiations to purchase a house in West Perth, but as favourable arrangements were then under way with the Museum the Society did not accept the offer.

#### *Endowment Fund*

In May 1928 the Society established an endowment fund based upon a donation of £100 from Major R. Thynne. The purpose of this fund was, and I quote, "To give a guarantee of publication which it has not previously been possible to do." Then in 1936 a most ambitious scheme was suggested by Mr. E. W. Edwards who recommended that leading business firms be approached with the idea of establishing an

endowment fund of £50,000. Needless to say this scheme proved to be unworkable.

However, from time to time moneys were added to the Endowment Fund in the hope of building up sufficient finance for a building project but rising costs greatly outstripped the growth of the fund which now stands at approximately £1,000 and all building schemes have now been abandoned.

### Membership

Membership of the Mueller Botanical Society was, as the name would suggest, confined mainly to those interested in botany, but because of its great scientific and popular appeal, the State's flora attracted the attention of both scientists and amateurs. As the Society grew, its expanding interests were reflected in the various name changes which culminated in the present title of Royal Society.

Shortly after the Royal Charter was granted in November 1913 His Majesty King George V graciously consented to become Patron of the Royal Society (March 10th, 1914) and so Western Australia followed South Australia as the second state in the Commonwealth to be granted Royal Patronage. His Excellency Major General Sir Harry Barron was then elected Vice Patron and succeeding monarchs and governors have honoured the Society by occupying these respective positions up to the present time.

Neither the Royal Society nor its predecessors have ever required special academic qualifications of their members and as a consequence the earlier membership in particular reflected a very wide variety of interests.

Although membership numbers were small in the earlier societies the influence they wielded was disproportionately large. This is easily explained however, by the names which appear on the membership rolls.

For instance the inaugural chairman of the Mueller Botanical Society was the Hon. E. H. Wittenoom M.L.C. and Sir John Forrest K.C.M.G. was elected President with E. H. Wittenoom Vice President. His Excellency the Governor Lt. Col. Sir Gerard Smith K.C.M.G. was elected Patron and the Vice Patron was G. Leak M.L.A. Other members included Hon. J. W. Hackett M.L.C., Sir George Shenton and of course numerous professional scientists.

During its first year the Royal Society's membership stood at 85 but by 1923 the numbers had grown to 253, and included an Archbishop, the Chief Justice and other members of the judiciary, four politicians, seven university professors, 13 medical practitioners, the Director of Education, the Director of Agriculture and many prominent business men. The present membership of 246 indicates that the Society has grown very little in recent years and the personnel represented shows that we are attracting mainly working scientists. While this is regrettable, a similar change has occurred in other state Royal Societies and is the outcome of the ever increasing specialisation which characterises the present age.

I do not propose to deal in any detail with individual members but it is pertinent to point out that many of the State's most eminent scientists have been associated with the Society

and that the standard of the papers published has earned the Royal Society of Western Australia a very high professional status both at home and overseas. Early workers such as J. H. Maiden, L. Diels, E. Pritzel and W. V. Fitzgerald in the botanical field; J. T. Jutson, A. Gibb Maitland, E. de C. Clarke and E. Simpson as geologists and mineralogists and B. H. Woodward, J. Dakin, W. Michaelson and L. Glauert as Zoologists set a standard which has been worthily maintained.

The only contemporaries I shall mention in this brief summary are several foundation members who have maintained their association with our Society. Three of these, Mr. W. B. Alexander, Mr. F. R. Feldtmann and Dr. D. A. Herbert, have been honoured tonight by election to Honorary Membership. The others to which I wish to refer are Sir John B. Cleland and Professor A. D. Ross. Sir John Burton Cleland is the senior member of the Royal Society. He was elected to the West Australian Natural History Society on May 22nd, 1906 and joined the 1906-7 Council, and was co-editor. In 1908/9 he was Chairman of the Society and formed part of a sub-committee which considered the formation of the Royal Society.

Dr. Cleland was born in 1878 and was educated at the Prince Alfred College in Adelaide and Sydney University. He came to Western Australia in 1906 as Government Pathologist and Bacteriologist, having spent 2 years at the London Hospital as Cancer Research Scholar. In 1908 he was appointed Acting Principal Medical Officer and Acting President of the Board of Health in Western Australia. He resigned in 1909 to join the New South Wales Department of Health where he remained until his appointment to the Chair of Pathology at the University of Adelaide, a post he held until his retirement in 1948.

Although a medical man, his recreational activities included anthropological, botanical and mycological interests. It is in the latter field that he has achieved an eminent position in the Australian scientific world and his book "Toadstools and Mushrooms and Other Larger Fungi of South Australia", is a standard reference book.

Sir John Cleland was elected an Honorary Member of our Society in July 1963.

Professor Ross was elected to the Western Australian Natural History and Science Society on March 11th, 1913 and other members joining that night were Professor Wilsmore, Professor Whitfield and Professor Woolnough. Professor Ross and A. Gibb Maitland served as Vice Presidents under the foundation president of the Royal Society, Professor Dakin, and Professor Ross first occupied the Presidency in 1916. He again held this office in 1923. Some indication of Professor Ross' enthusiasm can be deduced from the fact that during this second term 14 new members and 45 nominations were passed at one meeting. Professor Ross is the only member to have occupied the presidential chair for a third term and this he did in 1940-41.

In recognition of his services to the Society and to science Professor Ross was elected as an Honorary Member in July, 1957.

## Housing

The first meeting of the Mueller Botanical Society in 1891 was held in the Council room of the Town Hall and the Society continued to meet there until 1897. Meetings were later held at the Department of Agriculture, "West Australian Chambers," St. George's Terrace, and then in the Technical School, at the invitation of the Director, Mr. Alex Purdie. In 1905 the West Australian Natural History Society established its headquarters at the Museum, but in 1909 it became necessary to move and some meetings lapsed for want of a meeting room. In 1910 the Society was given accommodation in the Department of Agriculture next to Government House, but was forced to move the following year. After extensive investigations arrangements were made to share the rooms of the Theosophical Society on the third floor of the West Australian Chambers, St. George's Terrace, at a weekly rental of 10s. This covered cleaners and lighting, also the loan of a lantern providing the Society provided an arc lamp. The society to "make good any damage".

The society's library and herbarium were also accommodated and the rent was later raised to 30s. This was only agreed after efforts to find other suitable quarters and amongst the prospects investigated was the Perth Literary Institute. Early in 1916 the society received notice to quit from the Theosophical Society and was fortunate once again to find accommodation at the Museum.

The society remained at the Museum until July, 1940, when it moved to the 7th floor of the University-owned Gledden Buildings. The Institution of Engineers leased the entire top floor of the building and accepted the Royal Society as tenants. The original rent requested was £40 per annum, but negotiations finally closed at £30 for the first seven years rising to £40 thereafter. The society agreed to procure its own library shelving and the Institution of Engineers had the option of purchase after five years. In 1954 the rent was raised to £60 a year and finally to £100 a year. For 17 years the Society was comfortably housed in Gledden Buildings, and for much of that time it was able to employ the Institution of Engineers' clerical staff for typing and the distribution of notices.

Then in 1957 the University terminated its lease to the Institution of Engineers and although the Royal Society supported the engineers and others in a strong protest to the University, in the belief that scientific organisations could expect and had indeed been promised, some preferential treatment in the matter of accommodation in Gledden Buildings, these representations were unsuccessful and the Society was once again forced to find a new home.

It is perhaps some consolation to note that the Royal Society of London found itself in a somewhat similar plight in 1866. The incident is reported in "Nature," December 28th, 1963, p. 1259, as follows:—

The occupancy of Burlington House by the Royal Society, which began in 1857, did not long remain undisturbed, for in 1866 the Government decided to allocate it to

the Royal Academy. The manner in which this event was announced seems to indicate that the Royal Society was not esteemed as highly in ruling Government circles as the Fellows might have wished, or may indeed have imagined, or that in some way it had been outmanoeuvred. The first information that the Society had of the impending move came from the columns of *The Times* of 1867, in the form of a statement that the Government had decided to give the Royal Academy a permanent lease of Burlington House, with the right to extend northwards. Sir Edward Sabine, the President, was away at the time—let me hasten to add very properly so, as it was during the summer vacation—but then, as now, the Society had an alert treasurer, Prof. W. A. Miller, who promptly wrote to the Prime Minister, Lord Derby, to enquire if the announcement was true. It was.

Fortunately the eviction from Gledden Buildings coincided with an expansion and building programme at the Museum and the accommodation which is now so generously provided by the Trustees has given members many of the facilities for which they have been seeking so long.

## Publications

*The Journal of the Royal Society of W.A.*

One of the most important functions of our Society is of course the printing of the annual Journal and various steps to ensure continuity of publication have been outlined under the heading of "Finance."

The first journal produced was that of the Mueller Botanical Society in 1899 two years after the foundation of the Society. Eleven parts were printed up to December, 1902, then the name of the society was changed and the Western Australian Natural History Society published six numbers between May, 1904 and February 1909. Under the name of the Natural History and Science Society of Western Australia three more numbers were produced between August 1909 and 1914. The first issue being numbered Vol. III No. I. The first volume under the title of Royal Society of Western Australia appeared in 1916 and was numbered Vol. I.

One of the main objectives of all our journal editors has been to ensure the rapid publication of papers once they have been received and various expedients have been adopted in attempts to achieve this. For instance in May, 1923 it was decided to print each paper as soon after delivery as possible and to make authors reprints available immediately. This practice was later discontinued because, in the case of taxonomic papers, the early distribution of authors reprints did not constitute "publication" under the "International Rules of Zoological Nomenclature."\*

Throughout the depression and war years the Society maintained its publication with very great difficulty. Lack of finance hampered the Society and lack of manpower and facilities greatly impeded the Government Printer. For

\*This rule has since been revised.

several years after the war, efforts to retrieve the situation were not completely successful and in June, 1944 the Hon. Editor (Mrs. C. F. H. Jenkins) submitted a report to Council summarising the reasons for various delays, itemising the steps which had been taken to try and improve the situation and concluding with the following comments:

While the delay in printing is to be regretted, it was inevitable under war-time conditions, and in the post-war era the position has been aggravated by power break-downs, the latter affecting private industry as well as the Government Printer.

It is obvious from the figures presented that the printing of the Journal has been greatly expedited in the last twelve months.

From actual experience there is little evidence to suggest that there would be any great advantage from a speed of publication point of view in leaving the Government Printer. On the other hand, once this policy has been adopted, especially in view of the recent negotiations with the Under Treasurer, it is unlikely, should the Society again find itself in financial difficulties, that a very sympathetic hearing would be given by the Government to any request for further assistance.

In order to reduce some of the confusion associated with the correct year of publication and the actual printing date of the journals produced during this period it was decided to designate each publication with a volume number only, although of course, the date of publication was clearly indicated inside. This practice is still being followed.

With the building of new premises for the Government Printer conditions gradually improved and in 1957 the President Dr. A. Wilson was able to report further favourable arrangements with the Government Printer which can be summarised as follows:

1. The Journal shall be printed by the Government Printer free of charge to the Society.
2. The Journal shall consist of 410 copies of each of four parts per year, each part being restricted to 32 pages.
3. The Journal shall have the new type face and format of Volume 39 (1955).
4. The number of text figures, plates and maps shall not be arbitrarily fixed but shall be comparable to that allowed in the average of previous volumes of the Journal. Any difference of opinion concerning the number of allowable illustrations shall be resolved by discussion between the Government Printer and the Editor of the Journal after the Referees' reports on the suitability for publication of the papers concerned are available.
5. The excess cost involved in the preparation of the blocks for coloured illustrations (i.e. excess over cost of black and white illustrations) shall be met by the Society.
6. Cost of the reprints of papers shall be borne by the Society.

A later request for 600 copies of each issue was refused and the present arrangements (20/9/63) provides for 410 copies of 32 pages free plus 160 extra copies by purchase and any additional pages to be paid for at cost.

A notable concession was the Government Printer's agreement to carry the cost of blocks. Previously these had been made by a private firm, the Society and the author sharing the cost equally.

#### *The Proceedings of the Royal Society of W.A.*

In the earlier publications of the Society it was customary to publish the Annual Report, Balance Sheet and other relevant information but in later years these have been excluded to allow greater space for papers. To meet this deficiency a duplicated "News Letter" was instituted in April 1961 and in June of the same year the title was altered to that of, "Proceedings of the Royal Society of Western Australia". This publication has been well received by members and is being continued.

#### *Contributions*

Contributions to the Mueller Botanical Society dealt of course with plant matters only but the later societies welcomed any type of scientific paper. An analysis of the articles submitted shows that at all times papers on natural science have greatly predominated and that while a few articles dealing with the physical sciences were contributed to the earlier volumes none have been received in recent years. This is of course to be expected as more and more specialist bodies and publications become established. As with most other Australian Royal Societies, papers on Geology, Zoology and Botany greatly outnumber those on any other subjects and together they total 84% of the Royal Society's publications—the break down being Geology 36%, Zoology 30% and Botany. 18%.

#### **Library**

The Royal Society library at present numbers some 6,000 volumes and although a few books are included, stocks consist mainly of scientific journals which have been received from Universities and other scientific institutions in exchange for our publication.

Exchange agreements at present exist with 225 scientific institutions in 47 overseas countries as follows:—

Argentina	French W. Africa
Austria	Germany
Belgium	Holland
Brazil	Hungary
Bulgaria	India
Canada	Indo-China
Ceylon	Indonesia
China	Ireland
Cuba	Israel
Czechoslovakia	Italy
Denmark	Japan
Egypt	Yugoslavia
England	Madagascar
Ethiopia	Malaysia
Finland	Mauritius
France	New Zealand

Norway	Switzerland
Pakistan	Tanganyika
Poland	Uruguay
Portugal	Uganda
Puerto Rico	U.S.A.
South Africa	U.S.S.R.
Spain	Venezuela
Sweden	

A further 250 Journals are distributed to institutions within the Australian Commonwealth.

The housing of the library has always presented a problem for sufficient space has never been available and lack of money has prevented an adequate binding programme. At present the Society's library is integrated with that of the Western Australian Museum and we are fortunate in having the services of the Museum librarian. Even now however, bulk stocks of our journal are in storage elsewhere. There is a continuing demand for back numbers to meet new exchanges and so hundreds of volumes need to be retained. At one stage it was necessary to hire storage space when surplus publications could not be placed with accommodating members. Amongst the temporary housing which has been used for these journals may be mentioned the basement of the Museum, the storage files of the West Australian Newspapers Ltd., an abandoned chapel used for storage by the Department of Agriculture, Adelaide Terrace, the roof of the University Chemistry Buildings and a strong room in the Supreme Court.

Some of the more specialised journals such as Chemical Abstracts are on permanent loan to the Perth Technical College and a few rare volumes, which were passed for safe keeping to the Public Library during the last war, are still held by the State Library.

### Management

The management of the Royal Society has been vested for many years in a Council consisting of a President, 2 Vice Presidents, Past President, Treasurer, Librarian, Jt. Hon. Secretaries and 8 additional members. Originally the two secretaries were appointed to represent the physical and natural sciences, but in actual practice one attends to Council duties and the other to notices and affairs connected with the general meetings.

Ten Council and ten general meetings are normally held during the year with a two month's recess in mid summer. In earlier times however, the Society met every month and in one year as many as 25 meetings of council were held.

Of the various sub-committees appointed from time to time one of great importance is the Publications Committee. This body examines very carefully all papers submitted to the Society for publication, selects referees and is generally responsible for ensuring that the publication standard is maintained at a high level.

Although the rules of the Royal Society and its predecessors have been revised from time to time to meet changing circumstances their

main object has been to promote the study of science in all its branches and to provide members with the maximum facilities to achieve this end. The latest major revision was conducted in 1936 by the society's honorary solicitor the Hon. John Nicholson and was associated with the Society's incorporation. The Certificate of Incorporation was actually received in 1937.

During the last war normal meetings of the Society were interfered with by blackout restrictions and for several years evening meetings were cancelled. To ensure continuity of publication and routine business however, an executive committee met monthly at 4.30 p.m. and reported to a quarterly meeting of the full Council.

### Formation of Sections

As far back as 1904 the advisability was discussed of forming Geological, Botanical and Zoological Sections within the Natural History and Science Society, but no definite action was taken. Later the Royal Society of New South Wales was questioned on the formation of its Field Naturalists' Section, but again no action followed and the formation of the Western Australian Naturalists' Club in 1926 settled this particular issue.

In 1924 consideration was given to the formation of a Physical Chemistry and Mathematics Section within the Society, but again without results. It was not until April 1932 that the first Section, a Biological Section, was finally formed under the chairmanship of H. Womersley. Twenty-five members attended the inaugural meeting and the Section continued to meet regularly until October 1936 when attendance declined and it was recommended to the parent Council that meetings be called only at the request of the Chairman (C. F. H. Jenkins) and no further meetings of this Section have been held.

The main purpose underlying suggestions for the formation of sections was to provide facilities for specialised groups who might otherwise be tempted to form separate organisations to the detriment of themselves and the parent body. It is felt by many that in a State such as Western Australia with a very limited scientific population much useful effort may be dissipated by the formation of small specialist bodies. These often have inadequate finance to run a publication and after the first burst of enthusiasm may fade out or merely struggle along.

The Western Australian Naturalists' Club with several virile groups illustrates the mutual benefits which can accrue from the judicious formation of sections.

### The Future

From this brief survey it is clear that the Royal Society and its predecessors had much greater influence on public affairs in years gone by than is the case today. For this reason some people believe that Royal Societies as a group have outlived their usefulness and that they are threatened with ultimate extinction.

As the oldest scientific Society in Western Australia and one which is still quite virile after many years service to Western Australian science I contend that the Royal Society of Western Australia still has a very important role to play, although perhaps a different one from that of 50 years ago. In an age of ever increasing specialisation when it is becoming more and more difficult even for scientists to understand one another, the Royal Society should have an important function in bringing together different branches of science and also presenting science to the layman.

This function was well expressed by Bishop Riley in his Presidential Address to the Western Australian Natural History Society as far back as 1907 and I quote:

How often do we find men going outside the particular subject on which by training they are competent to dogmatise, to speak on other subjects full of difficulties even for the learned, with utmost assurance. To correct such a possibility it is well to join a Society like this. I mean it is well for the unscientific student, for in the presence of men of learning he finds out how little he knows, which is the first step, as we all admit, in the pursuit of knowledge. It is good too, for the learned to come amongst the ignorant, for a man finds out where his knowledge is weak when he tries to explain to others things about which they know little.

While it seems inevitable that specialists will continue to try to learn "more and more about less and less," within the Royal Society these specialists have an opportunity to learn something about other branches of science and to counteract the restrictive effects of specialisation. Unfortunately, some members do not recognise this function of the Society and so attendances vary according to whether the programme has a botanical, a zoological or a geological flavour. The speakers themselves are not always without blame for these conditions because of their failure to cater for the layman or the non specialist. It should be possible to make the subject of most papers acceptable to a mixed audience (specialist and non specialist) and to rely on the published version to indicate the scientific status of the contribution.

Associated with the gradual reduction in the non-scientific membership of the Royal Society there has been a noticeable decline in the social status of such functions as the Annual Meeting. There are those who regret the passing of the more formal Conversaziones held in the Perth Town Hall, the Karrakatta Club or the University, when the effects of the Presidential Address were softened by a lavish supper and a wide variety of exhibits, some relating to high fashion and others to science.

Another noticeable change is the attitude of the Press to scientific news. Bishop Riley's Presidential Address from which I have just quoted was published in full and many other papers and discussions of that era occupied up to two columns of the morning paper, but now a completely new set of values restricts the average reader to a diet of war news, scandals, sporting highlights and science fiction.

Most will agree however, that these changes are inevitable and that any attempt to put the clock back would be futile. But one thing is certain, that despite the various changes in our Society's personnel and status, its scientific integrity and importance are as sound as ever. In emphasising the scientific attributes of our work its practical significance is sometimes overlooked, but it should be realised that many of the geological papers published by our members have had a direct bearing on the development of the State's vast mineral resources and that the botanical and zoological contributions have provided fundamental information which is essential to a proper understanding of our flora and fauna.

When it is remembered that most contributors to the Journal are either Government Officers or University research workers, and that all work connected with the preparation and editing of the papers is done in an honorary capacity, it will be obvious that our Journal provides the Government with the cheapest possible means of disseminating the results of scientific work done in this State. In view of this fact and the past record of the organisation, we believe that the Royal Society of Western Australia has a most important role to play in the continued development of the State, and that our Society is entitled to the strongest possible support from scientific workers, the lay public and the Government.